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CURRENT AMERICAN LITERATURE.

THE commemoration of the quarter-millenary of Harvard has served more than one useful purpose, since, besides reminding New England people that their own oldest college was founded earlier than several distinguished European Universities, it has directed general attention to the importance of preserving, or, at all events, describing other extant antiquities of the pre-revolutionary era. In Mr. Porter's book* we have not only a faithful, but, in respect of illustrations, a sumptuous record of rambles in the north end of Boston, where most of the lingering vestiges of the colonial epoch are to be sought. In this quarto volume, of upward of 400 pages, are presented pictorial reproductions of scores of public or private buildings (all but one of which are standing), together with an adequate account of the periods in which they were erected, and of their subsequent vicissitudes. It is unquestionably true that no town or city within the present territorial limits of the United States—not even St. Augustine or Santa Fé, although these places were settled considerably earlier—can pretend to vie with Boston in the number and historical interest of its ancient edifices. Here, for instance, is Paul Revere's house, in North Square, built soon after the great fire of 1676, its predecessor on the same spot having been the parsonage of the Second Church, bought for the use of Increase Mather. We suppose that very few Bostonians could find their way to North (originally known as Clarke's) Square, which is, in fact, not a square at all, but a triangle, which, with its old cobble-stone pavement, recalls the market-place of an English provincial town. A market-place it was more than two hundred years ago, but is now, we learn, only to be reached through a narrow opening in North street, formerly known as Mountfort's Corner. In North street, opposite Sun Court, is also to be seen a little two-story, gambrel-roof house, which was erected in the reign of Charles II. In Salutation Alley, which opens out of Hanover street, and which is just wide enough to admit the passage of one wagon, is a quaint little house, the old home of Nathaniel Greenwood, which is one of the two or three oldest houses remaining in Boston. Salutation Alley, like all the other English streets of its epoch, had no side-walks, but had a gutter running through the middle. The houses bordering it had originally gardens in front, like the dwelling-houses of old London in the times preceding the great fire which took place in the reign of Charles II. The best-preserved specimen in Boston of the early style of brick houses is at No. 23 Unity street; precisely when this building was erected is not known, but it was sold to the progenitor of its present owners as early as 1724. Another brick house adjoining this, and identical with it in age and style, was, for many years, owned by Benjamin Franklin, and was the home of two of his sisters. The large brick house

* *Rambles in Old Boston, New England*, by Edward G. Porter. Cupples, Upham & Co.

at the corner of Salem and Bennett streets also carries us back to a period when George I. had recently come over from Hanover to ascend the English throne. Even more interesting is the fragment of an ancient wooden dwelling at the corner of Bennett and Hanover streets. This is the remnant of the house built in 1677 by Increase Mather, and in which his son, Cotton Mather, spent a part of his boyhood. The pride of the North-End of Boston is Christ Church, built in 1723, and the oldest ecclesiastical edifice now standing in Boston. Among the chief treasures of the Church is a communion service, part of which was presented by George II. in 1733, and a folio Bible, one of the so-called Vinegar Edition of 1717. The largest and most complete example of a wooden dwelling of the seventeenth century yet extant in Boston stands on the east side of Salem street. There are said to be reasons for believing that this house, which at one time belonged to Adam Winthrop, was built as early as 1680. The windows have solid plank casings, tenoned and pinned together, and the whole frame is as strong as that of an old-fashioned line-of-battle ship. We may further mention that another wooden building, still standing on a corner of Faneuil Hall Square, belongs to a period as far back as 1690, and was originally only thirty feet from the dock, which is now far distant. Faneuil Hall itself, by the way, stands on the site of what was once the town dock, to which the tide came up. But from the point of view of age the gem of old Boston is, perhaps, the Tremere house, near the extreme end of North street. This must have been erected before 1674, since a deed recording its conveyance is dated in that year. We are unable to enumerate other curious remains of ancient Boston depicted in Mr. Porter's book, but we have doubtless said enough to indicate the value of the work, from both the artistic and the antiquarian point of view, to all students of New England history, as well as to the many persons who, through birth or derivation, are bound by peculiar ties to the capital city of the Massachusetts colony.

We should have nothing but praise for Mr. Bush's account* of the first century of Harvard's corporate existence but for the sub-title which he has somewhat carelessly allowed himself to give his book. "The first American university," in any legitimate meaning of the word "American," Harvard College cannot profess to be, seeing that the universities of Lima and Mexico were each founded at least eighty years earlier. We should, however, at once say, in justice to the author, that the too pretentious designation to which we have adverted, is out of keeping with the thoroughly honest tenor of the narrative. In this book, unlike some histories of Harvard College, we are annoyed by no attempt to make great things out of small. The truth is not disguised by Mr. Bush that, for at least a century after its foundation, the institution, which laid claim to the ambitious name of college, was really in respect, both of pecuniary resources and the number of its pupils, decidedly inferior to many an endowed school of the present day, and notably, for instance, to Philip's Exeter Academy. Thus, in 1723, eighty-five years after its beginning, the college possessed a library of but 3,500 volumes, or about as many as are now contained in the library of the Golden Branch Society at Exeter. Again in 1726, the Hollis endowment of a professorship of mathematics and natural philosophy produced an income of but twenty-six pounds sterling, which was, nevertheless, considered an honorable stipend, although, after making every allowance for difference in the purchasing value of money, we can now see that it was extremely niggard. The number of pupils graduated from the college during the first sixty-five years of its existence was five hundred and thirty-one, or, on an

* Harvard, the First American University, by George Gary Bush. Cupples, Upham & Co.

average, only about eight a year. If, on the other hand, we look at the studies pursued, we can see that the Harvard of those days was rather a theological seminary, than an establishment intended to qualify its graduates for all the liberal professions. Unless specially excused, all students, except the Freshmen, were obliged, four days in the week, to receive instruction in Hebrew, and treatises in divinity also figure conspicuously in the lists of prescribed text-books.

We must, nevertheless, admit that, as regards proficiency in the classical languages, or at all events in Latin, young men were carried further in the Harvard of the seventeenth century than they are now in the schools that prepare lads for universities. This will be clear if we point out the requirements for admission, which, so far as Latin is concerned, do certainly seem to have been higher two and a half centuries ago than they are now. The rule laid down by President Dunster, in 1642, was that every applicant for admission must be able to "read Cicero or any other such like classical author at sight, and make and speak true Latin in verse and prose, besides declining perfectly the paradigms of nouns and verbs in the Greek tongue." Such a mastery of Latin, considered as a living language, was effected by the habitual use of it in the class room, and in familiar intercourse between teacher and pupil. How indispensable at that time the language was will be at once perceived when we recall the fact that while Mr. Dunster was presiding over the college, John Milton was employed by Cromwell to conduct diplomatic correspondence in Latin, which was then the medium of international communication, and so remained until French superseded it, owing to the material and moral ascendancy of Louis XIV. Two other facts brought out by Mr. Bush throw light on the relations of students to their instructors and to one another. The practice of flogging and of boxing the ear was for several generations firmly adhered to by professors and tutors, and it is not until about 1740 that we read of corporal punishment going out of use. The origin of hazing may be recognized in the disabilities long imposed on Freshmen. The following regulations, for example, are said to have remained in force during the seventeenth century; no Freshman could wear his hat in the college yard (unless it rained, hailed, or snowed), or speak to any member of the upper classes with his hat on, and every Freshman was obliged to go on errands for his seniors, whether these were graduates or undergraduates.

Of the addresses delivered by Mr. Lowell* in England and the United States during the last six years, nine have been collected and reprinted in a single volume. Of these, the remarks on Fielding, Coleridge and Wordsworth will be reperused with interest, but the speeches of abiding value, which imperatively called for publication in a permanent form, are the address on "Democracy," read in Birmingham, England, and the Oration commemorative of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Harvard University. In the former speech, Mr. Lowell publicly discussed and answered those objections to democracy, considered as an alleged enemy to culture and refinement, which are often urged in private, though they seldom find expression in the newspapers of England or the United States. Mr. Gladstone has, indeed, essayed on several occasions to figure as the defender of the social consequences of universal suffrage, but his advocacy was less effective than is Mr. Lowell's, because he met the imputations less roundly and frankly. Yet we cannot help thinking that more cogent than any of Mr. Lowell's arguments, more illuminative and persuasive than any of his metaphors, was the influence upon his audience of his own personality. Englishmen had learned to know the speaker thoroughly, and they could not but discern in him a living demonstration that

* *Democracy and other Addresses*, by James Russell Lowell. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

democratic institutions are no bar to the attainment of an urbane, elevated, and many-sided culture, to the evolution of the light and sweetness which Mr. Matthew Arnold seems to think impracticable in a land where numbers rule. Of the Harvard Commemorative address, we will only say that, apart from the perfect adaptation of every word to the occasion, the most noticeable feature was the strenuous, though courteous, vindication of the title of the Greek and Latin languages to retain a large and fundamental place in a liberal education. The case for Greek has never been put more forcibly, although, as every Harvard graduate well knows, the orator was trammelled by considerations of place and time, and of deference to persons and opinions just now predominant in the Councils of the University.

One cannot run over the 500 octavo pages which Mr. Frothingham has dedicated to William Henry Channing*—full of industry, of talent, of hearty appreciation and affection as they are—without recalling the query imputed by Longfellow to Priscilla, "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" There must be, we fancy, very few readers in this country or in England who would not rather see an autobiography of Mr. Frothingham than a biography of William Henry Channing, who, for the rising generation, will be chiefly memorable, if memorable at all, as the nephew of his uncle. For the writings of the once-famous William Ellery himself there is no longer much demand, and if the nephew, William Henry, is rescued from complete oblivion, he will owe his preservation to Mr. Frothingham. This book, however, is of an intrinsic importance, wholly independent of its biographical purpose. It is a history of liberal Christianity in the United States and England during the present century, and we suppose that no other survivor of the movement would have been so competent to write it.

Among the books called forth by the success attending the publication of Grant's memoirs, and which rely for circulation less on their intrinsic merits than on the author's personal association with the events described, the compilation by Admiral Porter† deserves particular mention. The writer speaks with a good deal of modesty respecting his own qualifications for the writing of history, and is not unwilling to acknowledge that the task may be more fittingly performed hereafter. We can see no reason for disputing the Admiral's averment that he has made up his narrative from the official record of the Navy, and that he has not allowed himself to suppress or distort facts, because he may have had official relations with particular commanders. His book, which comprises nearly 850 large quarto pages, is profusely illustrated, and the portraits alone would be likely to commend it to a wide audience.

Mr. Curtis's stout volume‡ seems to have been evolved for the purpose of demonstrating—what, so far as we know, no follower of Darwin would deny—that Darwinism is as yet unable to say precisely "at what point or stage in the series of developing animal organisms the mind of man was produced, or what it was when produced." With reference to both of these questions, the present attitude of the honest Darwinian is simply that of an agnostic, and he is willing to listen to any affirmative evidence, except that of revelation, for the hypothesis attributing a non-material origin to the mind of man. We do not understand Mr. Curtis

* Memoir of William Henry Channing, by O. B. Frothingham. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

† The Naval History of the Civil War, by Admiral David B. Porter. The Sherman Publishing Co.

‡ Creation and Evolution, by George Ticknor Curtis. Appleton & Co.

to contend that he has submitted affirmative evidence of this kind, which, even to himself, is satisfactory. Indeed, he seems to recognize the absence of scientific proof of the non-material origin of the intellect when he designates "the great want of this age" to be "the prosecution of inquiry into the nature of the human mind as an organic structure regarded as such," by which rather equivocal language we presume the author to mean the human mind considered as an entity essentially independent of the body, and only temporarily associated with it. When Mr. Curtis goes on to say, "It seems to me that the whole mission of science is now perverted by a wrong aim, which is to find out the external to the neglect of the internal," he has either overlooked the two most distinguished names in the history of contemporary or recent philosophy—those of Hartmann and of Hartmann's master, Schopenhauer—or he strangely misconceives the point of view from which those inquirers have approached the study of the human mind. They certainly did not insist on regarding metaphysics as a department of physiology.

The Historical Atlas,* compiled by Mr. Labberton, is a credit to American cartographers, and may be heartily commended to those unable to buy the expensive work by Spruner. The 141 maps here collected begin with conjectural indications of the Old Egyptian Empire, whose seat was at Memphis, and of the (nearly contemporaneous) first period of the Chaldean ascendancy in Western Asia. We are next shown, with a greater attempt at exactitude, the extension of the so-called New Egyptian Empire under Rameses II., and the circuit of Assyrian preponderance at the era of its greatest development, when, under Asshurbanipul, it stretched over Egypt, Cyprus, Palestine, and a part of Asia Minor. From that date—the seventh century B. C.—down to our own day, almost every change of reasonable duration in the political condition of every important section of the Mediterranean world is represented with a close approach to accuracy on a separate map. Especially helpful to the student will be found the map exhibiting the dominions and pretensions of Charles the Bold, and that portraying the gradual reunion of the Provinces of France to the Capetian crown. The successive transformations of England, from the landing of the Jutes to the Norman conquest, are made clear to the eye by not less than fourteen maps, supplemented by plans of the decisive battle-fields. The maps relating to Spain are the weakest features of the book. Not one of them relating to a period prior to the peace of Westphalia exhibits the two cities, Merida and Tarraco, which, throughout the Roman and Visigothic periods, were the most populous and opulent in the Peninsula. On the other hand, we note with satisfaction that Mr. Labberton is careful to bring out the existence of an independent Suevic kingdom in the northeast of the Peninsula during a considerable part of the Visigothic era. Without due attention to this fact, no one can understand the weakness of the Visigothic power at the date of the Arab invasion. We note some errors in the map illustrative of the Arabic ascendancy in the first quarter of the eighth century. At that date Cyprus and Crete were not Saracenic, but still Byzantine, and the Arab conquest of Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica was reserved for the Aghlabite dynasty of Kairoan.

* An Historical Atlas, by Robert H. Labberton. New York: Townsend MacCoun.